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The Aarhus Convention and its Implementation in Ireland: Strengthening the Role of NGOs in Environmental Governance

Abstract

One of the most striking features of the 1998 Aarhus Convention on *Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters* is the leading role envisaged for environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) in furthering compliance with environmental law. The Convention aims to secure the special status of ENGOS in environmental governance procedures by guaranteeing procedural rights of access to information, participation in decision-making and access to review mechanisms. Although Ireland did not become a Party to the Convention until September 2012, the Aarhus procedural rights were already guaranteed under European Union (EU) law. The EU has been a Party to the Aarhus Convention since May 2005 and has adopted a number of legislative measures to implement the Convention. This thesis examines the evolving role of ENGOS in environmental governance in Ireland. It provides a doctrinal analysis of the impact of the Aarhus Convention and EU law on Irish law and governance arrangements involving ENGOS. The thesis considers the extent to which Ireland has delivered faithfully on the standards set by the Aarhus Convention to facilitate ENGOS to fulfil the role envisaged for them under the Convention.